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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: All Taiwan's major Chinese-language and English-language dailies gave significant coverage on April 27 to the Taiwan authority's announcement Thursday evening that they were rejecting China's proposed route for the 2008 Olympic torch relay. News coverage also focused on the 2008 presidential election. In their news analyses, several papers, including the pro-status quo "China Times" and the pro-unification "United Daily News," criticized the DPP government's decision on the 2008 Olympic torch relay. These papers said Taiwan should not mix up sports and politics and that its decision - which puts ideology ahead of political reality - will only put the island in an unfavorable position.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" discussed the Bush administration's recent adjustment of its China policy. The article said the Washington-Beijing relationship is marked by the co-existence of conflict and cooperation, and both sides are adopting a two-pronged strategy to avoid dangers. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" refuted U.S. Senator John Warner's recent comment on Taiwan and said when it comes to cross-Straits relations, it is China, not Taiwan, who is the provocateur. End Summary.

A) "The U.S. Adjustment of Its China Policy"

Lin Cheng-yi, a research fellow at Academia Sinica's Institute of European and American Studies, opined in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] (4/27):

"It is evident that the Bush administration has been making significant adjustments to its foreign policies since the Democrats won back the control over the House of Representatives and the Senate in January 2007. The United States started to engage in bilateral talks with North Korea without China's mediation in between. Washington demanded that Pyongyang freeze its nuclear facilities rather than destroy them, and it started to discuss the situation in Iraq with Iran and Syria in Baghdad. Even though Washington and Beijing have the 'Strategic Economic Dialogue' and other conventions among their respective commercial, trade, and financial ministers, the Bush administration filed a complaints with the World Trade Organization in February and April, respectively, against China's illegal subsidies and infringement on intellectual property rights. ...

"There is intensive interaction going on between high-ranking U.S. and Chinese officials, but it may not necessarily indicate that the two sides are enjoying a friendly relationship. Instead, the Washington-Beijing relationship is marked by the co-existence of conflict and cooperation, and both sides are adopting a two-pronged strategy of carrot and stick to avoid danger. ..."

B) "Taiwan a Provocateur? What a Joke"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (4/27):

"... [US Senator John] Warner's comments come amid a flurry of such utterances by US officials, including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who on April 12 warned both China and Taiwan to refrain from provocations ahead of next year's Olympics in Beijing. It is de rigueur for US officials to talk about 'maintaining the status quo' and to give impromptu lectures on the nuances of the 'one China' policy and the Taiwan Relations Act. But Warner, with his comments to [US Pacific Command Commander Admiral Timothy] Keating, took direct aim at Taiwan. ...

"Unfortunately, Warner's insistence on singling out Taiwan highlights two of the most fundamental problems that this nation faces in its dealings with US policymakers. The first is a basic misunderstanding by many US policymakers and academics of what motives Taiwanese politicians and drives local politics. If Taiwanese politicians are saying and doing things that Washington or Beijing find irritating, it is the height of arrogance to assume that they are doing it simply because their 'tempers flare.' ...

"It was not rash anger that drove President Chen Shui-bian to get rid of the National Unification Council, for instance, or to change the name of Chunghwa Post to Taiwan Post. It was playing to his supporters - good ol' politicking. Meanwhile, the same goes for parts of the pan-blue camp (especially the People First Party) when they oppose procuring US weapons systems. These politicians aren't motivated by ire; they're motivated by a desire to keep their jobs by retaining supporters.

"The second problem that Warner's comments highlight is a perception among those people that Taiwan's de facto independence - and not China's questionable claim to Taiwan a part of its territory - is the source of friction in the Taiwan Strait. This little fallacy

needs to be put down as quickly as possible. Taiwan is not the problem. The Taiwanese people are not the problem. No one in Taiwan is seriously calling for the military to invade China (at least, not anymore). No one in Taiwan is threatening to wipe US cities from the map. No one in Taiwan is even saying that they would be willing to watch millions of Chinese die, simply for the sake of hollow pride. ... Senator Warner, at the end of the day, it isn't Taiwan that threatens war; it is China. So why warn Taiwan about being 'provocative'?"

YOUNG